(c) the steps taken by Government to restrict it in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) Despite the occurrence of drought in the country and the hardening of international crude oil prices, inflation rate has remained stable so far during the current financial year.

The first four months of the current financial year were characterised by a low inflation rate of less than 3 per cent. The annual point to point inflation rate based on the Wholesale Price Index crossed 4% level only once in September but has declined thereafter to remain close to the 3% level till date which is still regarded as low inflation rate. Marginal rise or fall in inflation remely reflects the seasonal price variations.

(c) Government made concerted efforts to keep inflation under control through effective supply management as also through close monitoring of prices and supply of essential commodities. Record public stocks of foodgrains at around 51 million tonnes ensured comfortable supply situation of foodgrains and helped stabilise their prices. Government's liberal release of surplus foodgrain stocks under various welfare schemes provided increased support to the vulnerable sections of the society.

Prosecution against companies

655. SHRI RAJU PARMAR:
SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have launched prosecution against several companies under the Companies Act;

(b) if so, the names of the companies against whom prosecution proceedings have been launched or are likely to be maintained; and

(c) whether it is also a fact that DCA have referred the cases of several companies for further investigation in the manipulation of their scripts and if so, the names of such companies?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. During the period from 01-04-

2001 to 31-03-2002, 8334 prosecutions were launched against 1964 companies and their officers in default. Department of Company Affairs orders/launches prosecutions for violation of various provisions of the Act, as and when such violations come to notice.

(c) As and when any such case is noticed, it is referred to SEBI for appropriate action.

Dividends of public sector undertakings

†656. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a sum of rupees 18,805 crore is likely to be deposited with Government exchequer by public sector undertakings as dividend during 2002-2003;

(b) if not, what is the estimate about this amount; and

(c) the comparative figures of the same to that of 1998-99 and the number of public sector undertakings from which the dividend is likely to be received?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) to (c) The dividend receipts from public sector undertakings for the year 2002-2003 are estimated as Rs. 9,455 crore. During the year 1998-1999, the budgeted receipts were Rs. 3,173 crore.

Recovery of direct taxes

†657. SHRI KAPIL SIBAL:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are yet to recover Rs. 1.5 lakh crores involved in the disputes relating to the direct and indirect taxes;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.